

Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program Semi-Annual Success Story ("Section C")  
October 2022

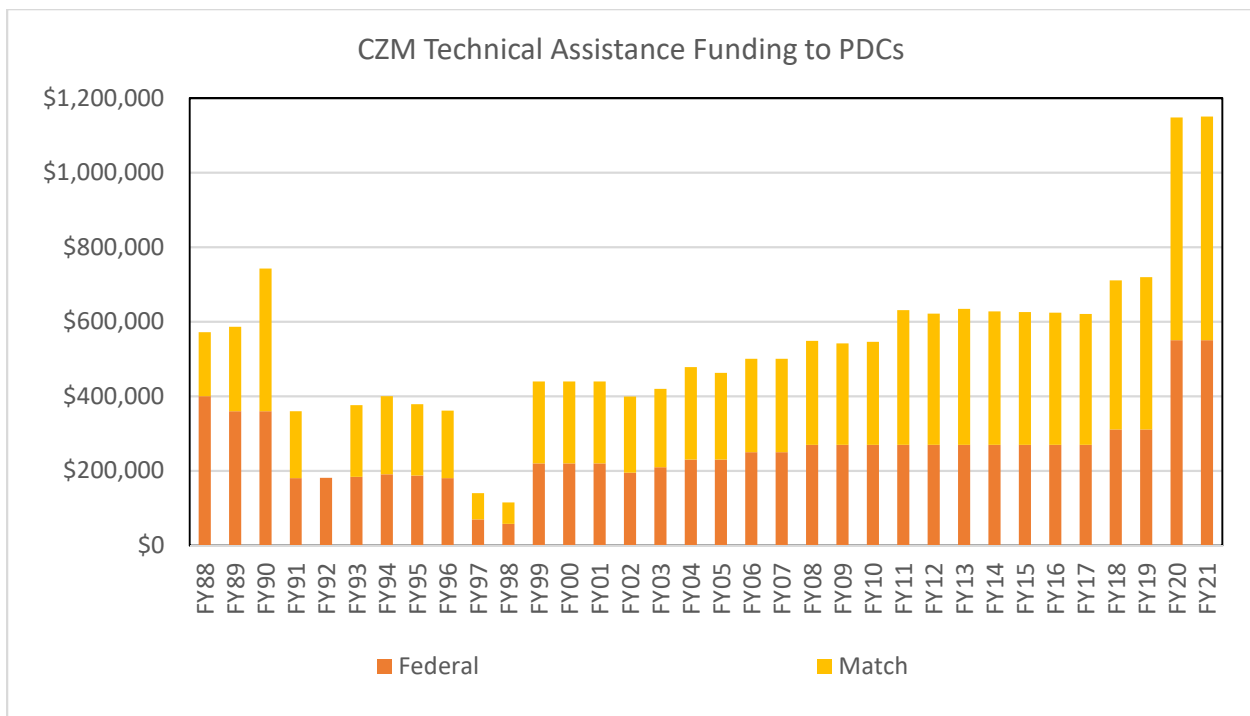
***Planning District Commissions Technical Assistance Funding Benefits Accrued***

**THE PROBLEM:**

Local governments play a vital role in the coastal zone, functioning as the front lines of coastal resources management. However, these coastal issues constitute a small proportion of the localities' responsibilities. Most of these local governments have limited resources, making these activities even more challenging to prioritize. As a result, local governments need technical and financial assistance in order to prioritize and carry out coastal resource management activities.

**THE FIX:**

As regional government planning bodies, Virginia's eight coastal planning district commissions (PDCs) play an integral role in the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program (Virginia CZM) by providing a critical link between state agencies and 87 coastal localities. Since 1988, Virginia CZM has supported each coastal PDC with an annual technical assistance (TA) grant. Over these 34 years Virginia CZM provided \$6,227,372 for annual TA grants, which was matched with \$7,164,140 for a total of \$13,391,512 (**Figure 1**). Among many things, these funds supported regular trainings for local government staff, technical assistance such as map making and other GIS services, and support for committees and boards that carry out coastal resources planning and management. As time passed on, the benefits of each annual TA grant began to accrue as contemporary efforts built upon former efforts. PDCs have been tracking these benefits accrued every grant cycle, and a select few are included in the section below to illustrate the multiplying impact of these annual TA grants.



**Figure 1.** TA grant funding from Virginia CZM since 1988, broken down by Federal funding and matched funds. FY20 and 21 grants include additional funding for the Coastal Resilience Focal Area.

## THE IMPACT:

### *Accomack-Northampton PDC*

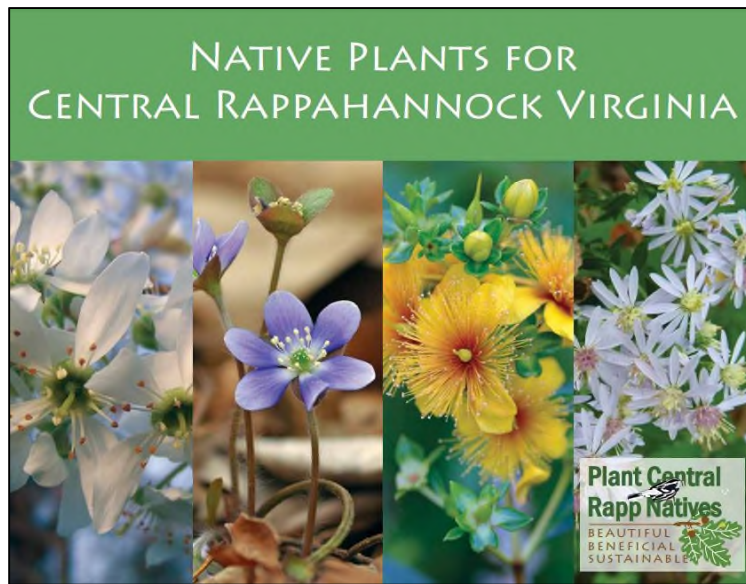
TA funding helps to sustain momentum for building regional climate adaptation by allowing A-NPDC to annually facilitate the Eastern Shore Climate Adaptation Working Group [Eastern Shore Climate Adaptation Working Group](#) (CAWG). Specifically, building capacity among the resource limited local governments has proven to be a challenge, which has limited progress. Using TA funding however, A-NPDC has built a stakeholder group of community leaders for climate adaptation on the Eastern Shore. These community leaders serve as point persons for CAWG meetings, updates, events, etc., acting as their locality's liaison for all things CAWG. By including community members and residents, capacity to adapt to climate change is not only increased within the region, but A-NPDC also gets to the heart of climate impact issues on a personal level. The CAWG has also advocated for resilience projects across the region, identifying projects for the Eastern Shore Resilience Projects Database. Moving forward with resilience efforts, and in conjunction with the recent Community Flood Preparedness Fund (CFPF) award for development of a regional resilience plan, this database will be updated to reflect the most current updates and next steps. Furthermore, TA funds have sustained meetings of the [Eastern Shore Groundwater Committee](#), a bi-county committee formed in 1990 by Accomack and Northampton Counties to study and plan for the protection of groundwater, the region's only source of fresh water.

### *Crater PDC*

A key benefit that Crater PDC has received from TA grants has been the ability to generate and sustain initiatives, especially with environmental stewardship partners. Of particular note, Crater PDC played an integral role in the creation and growth of the [Friends of the Lower Appomattox River \(FOLAR\)](#). Starting in FY1997, Crater PDC used their TA grant funds to partner with the National Park Service and hold a series of meetings to develop the [Appomattox River Corridor Plan](#). As an outgrowth of this plan, and using FY00 TA grant funds, Crater PDC facilitated the establishment of FOLAR and their bylaws. Using TA funds, Crater PDC provided office space and staff support for FOLAR, which at the time was staffed by all volunteers. This changed in 2014 when FOLAR hired their first staff member, and continued to grow as a focused organization ushering in the development of the Appomattox River Trail. As the years progressed, continued support from Crater PDC allowed FOLAR to grow into an organization with their own offices, multiple annual events and stream litter cleanups, a strategic Master Plan for the Appomattox River Trail, and an already-impressive portfolio of completed trailheads and trail segments along the river. Although FOLAR's capacity has grown immensely, Crater PDC continues to use a portion of their annual TA funds to help seed initiatives and support the work of FOLAR.

### *George Washington Regional Commission*

TA grants have been an important part of GWRC's recent growth in resilience planning, primarily through the creation of a regional Environmental Services Strategic Plan in FY19, which was a collaborative effort among GWRC, their member localities, nonprofits, and other stakeholders to delve into resiliency gaps and deficiencies, identify needs and wants, and develop goals and strategies to meet them over the next 10 years. The Plan included timelines and sources of funding identified, as well as a list of projects for each locality and their current status. This plan is also meant to be a living document, and is revisited frequently in the monthly meetings of the Regional Environmental Managers Technical Committee, which is comprised of locality environmental staff, state agency staff, nonprofits, and other stakeholders in the region. TA grants have also supported the [Plant Central Rappahannock Natives \(Community-Based Social Marketing\) Campaign](#), a group of regional stakeholders that have distributed educational material on the benefits of natives through their various organizations. CZM funds help GWRC continue to host the meetings at the GWRC office and to create and store program materials. In addition, CZM funds were used recently in securing a Building Resilient Infrastructure & Communities BRIC grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which was used to fund GWRC's Hazard Mitigation Update.



Plant Central Rapp Natives Plant Guide

#### *Hampton Roads PDC*

Over the last 10 years, the HRPDC's Coastal Resources Management Technical Assistance Program has provided foundational support for the agency's coordination and technical work. The program funds staff support for several regional committees, including the Regional Environmental Committee and Coastal Resiliency Committee at the staff level in addition to the HRPDC board's Coastal Resilience Subcommittee, which consist of elected officials. Support for these groups enables the discussion of significant regional issues related to flooding, water quality, land use policy, and other topics. In addition to coordination, the program provides funding for data management, analysis, and other technical work. The HRPDC now maintains regional GIS data layers on an online portal, HRGEO.org, and regularly updates, organizes, and makes available to its localities and other users LiDAR data and other data layers that are critical for local and regional planning. This has been particularly beneficial for modeling the impacts of flooding from sea level rise and other sources. As a result, the HRPDC has been well-resourced to support its localities on resiliency initiatives and to partner with other entities on additional projects. For example, the HRPDC has received \$2,099,340 in funding from the U.S. Department of Defense for four projects looking at resiliency and military installations, all of which build on the work completed in previous years with CZM support.

#### *Middle Peninsula PDC*

Using TA funds to first build awareness of coastal issues, then a framework for resolving them via tailor-made solutions for localities and individuals, MPPDC has received (and then leveraged) over \$21 million in additional grant funds in FY20-21 alone. Those funds equal more grants received in a single 18-month period than it has in the prior 50 years of the PDC and can be directly traced back to the investment of TA funds. Many of MPPDC's coastal programs are anchored by an eight-year-long strategic effort to address complex local needs through new legislation at the state level, made possible by TA funds for staff time. This effort continues and is critical to helping provide regulatory clarity for property owners and local governments in a complex environment, resulting in the region's ability to then find unique funding sources to address coastal challenges, including living shoreline revolving loan funds, dredge material reuse, and more. Dispersing that funding then happens through unique programs such as Fight the Flood (FTF), which remains the only online marketplace of its kind in the U.S. connecting property owners with tools, funding, and solutions to build more resilient shorelines. By 2022, FTF program investment on the Middle Peninsula had topped \$18 million in direct loans and grants. Thanks to a partnership with the Virginia Growth and Opportunity Fund (GO Virginia), Virginia Sea Grant, and Rural Innovation Stronger

Economy (RISE) grant program, the MPPDC has further leveraged the region's Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority (MPCBPAA) to use as a living laboratory for businesses to advance their next-generation products to address the most challenging coastal zone management issue facing the world: coastal flooding and sea level rise. The MPCBPAA owns over one thousand acres of donated and grant-acquired waterfront land scattered across the Middle Peninsula offering varied passive and active uses supporting public access, tourists, and resilience research.



Captain Sinclair Public Access Improvements (MPCBPAA)

#### *Northern Neck PDC*

NNPDC has a long history of using Virginia CZM TA funding to further hazard mitigation and resilience activities in each of its member jurisdictions, including planning to update and implement the regional Hazard Mitigation Plan. Since FY16, the NNPDC has utilized TA funding to administer the region's Hazard Mitigation Assistance Home Elevation Program which provides assistance to property owners applying for federal funding to elevate their homes out of the floodplain. In FY17 the NNPDC utilized TA funding to establish a regional Living Shoreline Initiative to promote best practices in shoreline management to protect property and increase residents' resilience to coastal flooding and erosion. In FY19 the NNPDC utilized TA funds to apply for and administer \$615,088 of National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and \$200,000 of DEQ Stormwater Local Assistance Fund grants for the Town of Warsaw Low Impact Stormwater Retrofit, an award-winning project that mitigates rainfall flooding and increased the Town's resilience. In FY20 the NNPDC utilized TA funding to facilitate member jurisdictions participating in the Virginia CZM-funded Resilience Adaptation Feasibility Tool (RAFT). The year-long RAFT process saw all ten localities establish a resilience working group and identify priority resilience actions to pursue that would also have the benefit of achieving hazard mitigation goals. Since FY21 the NNPDC has utilized the Virginia CZM program's Resilience Focal Area and dedicated funding to advance local resilience priorities identified during the RAFT. Additionally, the NNPDC facilitated the participation of member jurisdictions in Virginia CZM-funded Wetlands Watch Community Rating System (CRS) workshops. These workshops highlighted existing local actions and identified additional local actions that would improve each community's National Flood Insurance Program savings through the CRS program. The benefits accrued throughout the intervening years either through the NNPDC's TA grant or other Virginia CZMs-funded efforts have considerably improved local and regional planning related to hazard mitigation and resilience and have positioned localities to pursue implementation that will improve community resilience and awareness.



### *Northern Virginia Regional Commission*

NVRC's annual TA grants have been fundamental to the development and success of numerous programs, partnerships, and projects for the region since FY92. Over the past ten years, the grant program has also been utilized to establish and expand several sustaining partnerships, including the formation of the Northern Virginia Climate Resiliency Team (NVCRT) in FY18. NVCRT is a workgroup of regional technical and policy experts that meets on a quarterly basis to increase capacity for local jurisdictions to integrate climate change data and policies into local planning efforts. With TA grant funds, NVRC not only continues to coordinate the workgroup, but also works to address additional jurisdictional needs, such as data gaps, and supports critical infrastructure projects for the region. Notably, the TA Grant has also been vital to the success of NVRC's [Northern Virginia Clean Water Partners](#) (CWP) Regional Social Marketing Campaign since FY03. The CWP is composed of local jurisdictions, regional drinking water and sanitation authorities, schools, and businesses that work together to address stormwater pollution and source water protection in the region. With TA funding, NVRC continues to be able to provide program administration, including the acquisition of leveraged funds from partners to conduct an annual education and outreach campaign through social media and video advertisements, and to conduct a post-campaign behavior survey. Over 20 partners now participate in the program and meet on a bi-annual basis to collaborate and advance new and ongoing pollution-reduction initiatives.



Clean Water Partners Logo

### *Richmond Regional PDC (PlanRVA)*

Over the past several years, Virginia CZM Program funded projects have had ripple effects within and beyond the greater Richmond region. Prior to and throughout the 2010s Virginia CZM TA funds supported various coastal resource mapping and analysis efforts at PlanRVA: regional [green infrastructure mapping and analysis](#), [regional conserved land mapping](#)<sup>1</sup>, and a [regional water and sewer infrastructure inventory](#). Discussions at Coastal Policy Team meetings and publication of data to [Coastal GEMS](#) enabled PlanRVA staff to have many data resources readily available. As PlanRVA approached 2020, staff aimed to create regional GIS datasets that could be used by any project team. Staff worked internally to create a regional environmental data layer as well as a water resilience risk layer, both of which have been used by staff to inform Richmond Region Transportation Planning Organization plans and project evaluation processes, including [ConnectRVA2045](#) and the regional Long Range Transportation Plan. Similarly, over several years of TA grant funds ending in FY14, PlanRVA developed, updated, and printed three editions of the [Rivers of the Richmond Region map](#). This public access map and guide was distributed to visitor centers, outdoor retailers, local parks departments, and handed out at public events. After the third update of the Rivers of the Richmond Region map, James River Association staff used GIS data to build an [online resource](#) that has since grown into an [access map](#) for the entire James River watershed. More recently, a regional project led to the creation of a groundbreaking local government-tribal organization in Virginia. PlanRVA also signed the [Lower Chickahominy River Watershed](#) MOU and is using a portion of annual TA funds to provide

<sup>1</sup> PlanRVA worked with member localities and the Capital Region Land Conservancy (CRLC) to produce conserved land maps in FFY 16 and FFY 18. The GIS data for these maps were provided to Capital Region Land Conservancy in 2021 and are the basis for the map linked to. CRLC staff are now maintaining the CRLC easement data.



## Virginia Coastal Zone MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

administrative and technical assistance to the LCWC. Without this continued funding through the annual TA grant, it would jeopardize the sustainability of this important collaborative.

### **MORE INFORMATION:**

More information on the partnership between Virginia CZM and the PDCs can be found here:

<https://www.deq.virginia.gov/coasts/coastal-planning-districts>

### **PARTNERS:**

The Accomack-Northampton PDC, Crater PDC, George Washington Regional Commission, Hampton Roads PDC, Middle Peninsula PDC, Northern Neck PDC, Northern Virginia Regional Commission, and PlanRVA (Richmond Regional PDC)

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